

WBBM 780, January 6, 2006

CHICAGO -- The Shedd Aquarium opened a new exhibit that features some of the kinds of fish the government is trying to keep from entering Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes.

WBBM Newsradio 780's Bernie Tafoya reports experts say that, if the Asian carp gets into Lake Michigan or the other Great Lakes, it would badly throw off the balance of nature, severely reducing the numbers of fish that are native to the area. That's why an electric barrier is in place and a permanent one being built along the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Chuck Shea of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says the barrier works and is well worth the nine million dollars being spent on it.

He says that, "at certain times of year, we can actually see them approach the barrier in a school, stop, mill around, and go back".

Meanwhile, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk is proposing legislation that would require freighter ships to flush their ballast tanks with fresh sea water before they enter the Great Lakes system....another way to ensure invasive aquatic life doesn't make its way into the Great Lakes.

Kirk says "We have seen, about every 8 months, a new invasive species enter the Great Lakes" ...that there are over 170 of them in the lakes now. Kirk says it's "time to stop that".

Kirk says the Coast Guard believes requiring the flushing of ballast tanks would prevent invasive species from entering the Great Lakes.

Kirk spoke at the Shedd Aquarium which has a new exhibit ON invasive species, like the Asian carp that's being kept out of the Great Lakes by an electric barrier in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.